

THE
Bishop of LONDON's
Gilbert Compton
PASTORAL LETTER
TO THE ^{4372. d. 9.}
PEOPLE ¹⁻¹⁷

OF HIS
DIOCESE;

Particularly, to those of the two great
Cities of *London* and *Westminster*.

Occasion'd by some late Writings
in favour of INFIDELITY.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for SAM. BUCKLEY, in *Amen-*
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To the People of his Diocese;

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*Occasion'd by some late Writings in favour
of Infidelity.*

THE Office I bear in the Church
of Christ, and my particular rela-
tion to this Diocese, oblige me to
study your Spiritual Good, and to
warn you of any Danger to which
I see you expos'd, either in Principle or Prac-
tice. For tho' you are committed, as to your
Spiritual Affairs, to the more immediate Care
and Direction of Parochial Ministers, yet not
so, as to cease to be a part of the Episcopal
Care, especially in cases where the Concern is
general, and the Dangers such as may not fall
under the Observation of every particular Pa-

stor. And I am not without hope, that what I shall say to you, will be more generally attended to, and make an Impression somewhat stronger, as it comes to you directly from the hands of your Bishop; and, being not spoken, but written, you will have better Opportunity to peruse, consider, and apply it, with such Care and Deliberation as the Importance of the Matter deserves.

This Method, I own, is uncommon, but so is the *Occasion* too; and no where so great and pressing, as in these two large and populous Cities; whether we consider the variety of Temptations, or the powerful Influence of bad Examples; the corrupt Principles and Practices which first spring up here, or the quick and easy Propagation of them from hence into all Parts of the Kingdom; which makes the checking and suppressing them here as much as possible, to be truly a *National* Concern.

They who live in these great Cities, or have had frequent recourse to them, and have any Concern for Religion, must have observ'd to their great grief, ' That Profaneness and Impiety are grown bold and open; ' That a new sort of Vice of a very horrible nature, and almost unknown before in these parts of the world, was springing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been check'd by the seasonable Care of the Civil Administration; ' That in some late Writings, *Publick Stews* have been openly vindicated, and *Publick Vices* recommended to the Protection of the Government, as *Publick Benefits*; and, ' That great pains have been taken to make Men easy in their Vices, and to deliver them from the restraints of Conscience, by undermining all Religion,

ligion, and promoting Atheism and Infidelity; and, what adds to the Danger, by doing it under specious Colours and Pretences of several kinds. One, under pretence of opposing the Encroachments of Popery, thereby to recommend himself to the unwary Protestant Reader, has labour'd at once to set aside all Christian Ordinances, and the very Being of a Christian Ministry and a Christian Church; Another, under colour of great zeal for the Jewish Dispensation, and the literal meaning of Scripture, has been endeavouring to overthrow the Foundations of the Christian Religion; A third, pretending to raise the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and spiritual Meaning, has labour'd to take away the Reality of them, and by that to destroy one of the principal Evidences of Christianity. Others have shown a great zeal for *Natural Religion* in opposition to *Reveal'd*, with no other view, as it seems, than to get rid of the restraints of *Reveal'd Religion*, and to make way for an unbounded Enjoyment of their corrupt Appetites and vicious Inclinations, no less contrary in reality to the obligations of *Natural Religion*, than of *Reveal'd*. And all or most of these Writers, under colour of pleading for the Liberties of Mankind, have run into an unprecedented *Licentiousness*, in treating the serious and important Concerns of Religion, in a *ludicrous* and *reproachful* manner.

These are things, which no serious Christian, I might add, no serious Deist who has any sense of God upon his Mind, and any regard to Virtue and Morality or even to common Decency and Order, can behold and reflect on, without a very sensible Concern. Much more ought the Ministers of the Gospel to be awake, and
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to double their Care over the Souls committed to their Charge, when they see so many Devices set on Foot to corrupt and poison them; both in their Principles and Morals. Accordingly, on this occasion many excellent Books have been publish'd in defence of the Christian Religion, against those Writings in favour of Infidelity. In which Books, the Authors have with great learning, strength and perspicuity, maintain'd the cause of Religion, and detected the Sophistry of its Adversaries; Whose Art it has been, in some cases, to lay hold on little Circumstances, as if the whole of Christianity depended upon them; and by that to draw the Reader's Attention from the most plain and substantial Arguments for the truth of it; and at other times, by *perplexing* and *misapplying* the plainest Proofs, to make way for their own Interpretations, and for imposing them more easily upon unwary and ignorant Readers; and, which is no less unfair and disingenuous, to misrepresent the Sense of judicious Writers, and to pick weak Arguments out of those who are less guarded, in order to expose the whole as ridiculous. To defeat these indite'd Arts and Endeavours, the same learned Writers have taken off those false Colours, and placed the Evidences of Christianity upon their true foundation; and, by setting them in their proper and genuin light, and representing them in their united strength, have abundantly shown that no impartial and unprejudic'd person who considers them with attention, can doubt of their force and sufficiency to convince any reasonable and well-disposed Mind.

But because these Writings are too large and too learned, to be read and examin'd by the generality of People; and consist of such a chain

of Reasoning, as Persons of common Capacity cannot easily follow and comprehend; who, as they have less leisure as well as ability to enter into particular Examinations, are more liable to be impos'd upon, and more like to be attack'd by the Enemies of Christianity: For this reason, I have thought it incumbent upon me, to draw up for your use some few Rules and Cautions, which are short and easy, and which being frequently perus'd and duely attended to, may be a Means, under the blessing of God, to preserve sincere and unprejudic'd Christians from these dangerous Infections.

I. *Be sure that you have a Mind sincerely desirous to know the Will of God, and firmly resolv'd to comply with whatever shall appear to be his Will.* This is a necessary Preparation for the knowledge of Divine Truths, 'To be willing to know, and ready to practise; without which, men not only may be easily deceived by others, but are in effect determin'd beforehand to deceive themselves. Where there is an unwillingness to part with Lusts and Pleasures and worldly Interests, there must of course be a *Desire* that the Christian Religion should not be true, and a *willingness* to favour and embrace any Argument that is brought against it, and to cherish any Doubts and Scruples that shall be rais'd concerning it. From a Mind so dispos'd and so prejudic'd in favour of the Enemy, Christianity cannot expect a fair hearing, but on the contrary all the disadvantage and opposition that Lusts and Passions can suggest. And therefore our Saviour lays down this, as the true foundation of Divine Knowledge, *If any Man will do God's will, John vii. he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God; 17.* implying, that a sincere desire to know the Truth,

Truth, with an honest disposition to conform our wills and affections to it when known, is the best Preservative against Error in Religion, and carries with it a well-grounded assurance of the divine Aid, to assist Persons so dispos'd in their Enquiries after Truth. And the words do also carry in them this other Assertion, That whoever is *not* first sincerely dispos'd to do the Will of God, he shall be in great danger of *not* knowing the Doctrine whether it be of God, and of remaining in a state of Ignorance and Error.

II. *As a farther proof of your Sincerity, be careful and diligent in the use of all those Means, which God has afforded you for the right understanding of his Will:* Particularly, in reading the Scriptures, and making them familiar to you, and comparing one part of them with another; by which a moderate Capacity may make considerable advancement in the knowledge of Religion. And you must not fail to pray to God, that in all your Searches and Enquiries after the Truth, he will be pleas'd to guide and direct you by his Holy Spirit; which he is always ready to vouchsafe to every humble and sincere Mind. And if after all your own Endeavours, you meet with difficulties of any kind; have recourse to some persons of Piety and Learning, upon whose knowledge and judgment you believe you may safely rely. Only beware, that the Difficulties be not owing, either to a *willingness* on your part to raise them, or to the indulging yourselves in over-curious and needless Enquiries.

III. *After you have secur'd the Sincerity of your own Hearts, attend to the Lives of those who endeavour to seduce you, or whom you see endeavour-*

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ing to seduce others: Whether, in the general course of them, they have been sober, and regular; and virtuous; or, on the contrary, vicious and irregular. If the latter; do not wonder that they take so much pains to reason themselves into Infidelity, without which their Minds cannot be easy in the Enjoyment of their Vices; nor that they become Advocates for it, and are industrious to gain Profelytes, on purpose to keep themselves in countenance, and to make their Vices less infamous, by being more fashionable. Take it for granted, that such Men are Enemies to Religion, for no other reason, but because Religion is an Enemy to their Luxury and Lusts. For as it has been already observ'd under the first head, that a Mind virtuously dispos'd and sincerely desirous to understand the Will of God, is the best preparation for the knowledge of the Truth; so is a vicious mind and a *willingness* and *inclination* to disbelieve, the natural and necessary parent of *Error* and *Delusion*.

And as some are naturally led by their *Lusts*, to oppose the doctrines of Christianity; so others are led by *Pride* and *Self-conceit*, to raise doubts and disputes concerning any Opinions and Doctrines which are generally receiv'd and establish'd, how evident soever it may be, that the Doctrines they oppose are agreeable to all the principles of Virtue in general, and of Christianity in particular. Such men disdain to think in the *common* way; and valuing themselves upon a more than ordinary share of Knowledge and Penetration, do always affect Novelty and Singularity in Opinion. Which *opposing* humour was well express'd by one of our modern Advocates for Infidelity, in what he is reported

ed to have said of one of his Fellow-labourers to this effect, 'That if his own Opinions were *establisht* to day, he would oppose them to morrow.' When therefore you observe any person to be eager and forward in raising doubts and scruples about the Doctrines of Christianity, who also on *other* occasions appears to take a delight in disputing, and wrangling, and opposing the general Sentiments of Mankind; wonder not at it, but place it, as you well may, to the account of Pride and Self-conceit; and the natural effect of these, a Spirit of Contradiction.

IV. *When you meet with any Book upon the Subject of Religion, that is written in a ludicrous or unserious manner; take it for granted that it proceeds from a deprav'd mind, and is written with an irreligious design.* Such Books are calculated, not to inform the Understanding, but to corrupt the Heart. There is no Subject, how grave or sublime soever in it self, but may be turn'd into jest and ridicule; and by being so turn'd, may be made to appear mean and despicable. And the Promoters of Infidelity very well know, that if by this artifice they can take off the Reverence that belongs to Religion, the Minds of the people are easily carried into a disregard of it and an indifference about it; which is of course an inlett to Vice; and Vice quickly improves an Indifference about Religion, into a *Prejudice* against it, and by degrees into a profess'd *Enmity* to it. Be sure therefore to avoid this Snare; and do not only lay aside, but abhor all such Books as turn Religion into jest and mirth: For, next to the writing and publishing them, there is not a more certain sign of a deprav'd and irreligious Mind, than the find-
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ing any degree of *satisfaction* and *complacency* in them.

V. *Be not perswaded to part with Revelation, under pretence of relying on Natural Reason as your only Guide.* For Reason, without the assistance given it by Revelation, has in fact appear'd to be a very insufficient Guide. For which we may appeal to the endless and irreconcilable differences among the ancient Philosophers, not only in Speculative Opinions, but in the great Rules of Duty, as to what is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful; and even in the *chief End* or *Good* which man ought to propose to himself in order to his Happiness. And it would be very strange, to suppose that the generality of mankind have sufficient *leisure* and *ability* to enter into the depths of Philosophy, and to compare the Opinions of the several Philosophers, and to determin, upon the Foot of natural Reason, which of them is in the right and which in the wrong. And much more extraordinary would it be to expect, that for the sake of such an uncertain and impracticable Rule, they should lay aside a plain, clear and uniform Scheme of Duty, obvious to the meanest Capacities, and fully attested to come from God.

But suppose the Philosophers had furnish'd us with a *consistent* and *uniform* Scheme of moral Duties, which they are very far from having done; there are many other things that Revelation has discovered to us, which were either wholly unknown, or known very imperfectly, to the best and wisest among them, and yet are absolutely necessary to give Mankind a full knowledge of their Duty, and to make them proceed in it with Comfort and Constancy. Such are, 'The way in which an *acceptable Worship*

may be perform'd to the Deity; ' The certain method of obtaining Pardon of Sin, and Reconciliation to God, and supernatural Assistance to enable us to do his Will: and, ' That most powerful motive to Duty and Obedience, the *full Assurance* of Rewards and Punishments in another Life, according to our behaviour in this; without a firm perswasion of which (much firmer than any Philosopher ever arriv'd to) it is morally impossible that Mankind, in this corrupt State, should be restrained from Excess and Violence, and preserved in a regular and orderly course of Duty.

But the truth is; *Natural Religion*, as set up against Revelation by our present Advocates for Infidelity, is very different from that which the wisest of the ancient Philosophers discover'd by the light of Reason; and this, in some very material Points. With the one, the Government of the *Appetites* was their great Foundation of Virtue and Goodness; but with the other, the great aim seems to be to *gratify* them; and so, their main objection against Christianity must be, that it requires Self-denial, and lays restraints upon the irregular Appetites of Mankind. The ancient Moralists labour'd by all the Arguments they could find, to give themselves what they thought a *comfortable* Hope of the Immortality of the Soul and a future State; but there is too much cause to believe, that our modern Reasoners do not *wish* or *desire* that these things may be true; on the contrary, the great aim of all their Endeavours seems to be, to root the apprehension of them out of the World. The wisest and most learned of the Philosophers of old, saw and lamented their own Ignorance, and the Imperfection of the utmost Knowledge
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that Natural Reason can attain to, and the great necessity there was of some further Light. But our modern Philosophers are self-sufficient, so far from desiring further light of any kind, that it is one part of their character to disclaim all Assistance, even though it be from a divine Revelation. The Ancients preserv'd the greatest Reverence for things Sacred; but their pretended Successors in our Times, turn every thing that is Sacred into Jest and Ridicule. So that, Natural Religion, as now contended for among us, seems not to be meant for a Rule of Duty, but only a specious Name, to be set up against Revelation, and to prove Christianity, not only as to the *doctrinal* but even the *moral* part of it, to be a needless Institution. And certainly there cannot be a greater sign of a *perverse* and *deprav'd* Mind, than the *endeavouring* to depreciate it; 'As it is an Institution, that contains in it the Religion of Nature explain'd, improv'd, and rais'd to greater degrees of Purity and Perfection; (regulating the inward Thoughts as well as the outward Actions; requiring us to abstain not only from Sin, but from all *Tendencies* to it; not only from Evil, but from all *appearance* of Evil; commanding us to love and do good to our *Enemies* as well as Friends; and enforcing the strict observance both of Moral and Christian Duties, by Motives and Obligations stronger by far, than any that Natural Reason can suggest;)' 'As it lays down a plain and easy Rule of Life, adapted to the meanest as well as the highest Capacities; 'As the Precepts of it are excellently calculated for the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, by laying the strongest restraints upon their irregular Passions (Anger, Hatred, and Revenge,) and every where inculcating the

the most amiable Lessons of Meekness, Benevolence, and Forgiveness; ' As it requires and enforces a strict Observance of the Duties belonging to the several Relations of Mankind to one another, on which the Peace and Order, not only of private Families, but of publick Societies, so greatly depend; ' As it furnishes us with the best Motives and most substantial Arguments for Comfort in the time of Affliction, and enables us to bear all the Evils of this Life with Patience and Contentment; and finally, ' As it opens to us a most comfortable view of Happiness and Immortality in a future State. How such an Institution should become the object of their Hatred and Dislike, is not to be accounted for, but from somewhat very corrupt and irregular in their Hearts; which makes them first averse to the Purity it requires, and, for the sake of that, profess'd Enemies to the Institution it self.

VI. *Do not reckon the Truth of any Dispensation or Doctrine to be really Doubtful, merely because some Men affect to make a Doubt of it.* There are Monsters in Mind, as well as in Body; and it is an old Observation, that there was no Opinion so *absurd*, but what *some* Philosopher had held. The truth is, Follies and Absurdities in Opinion are without end, where Men give themselves up to Scepticism, and at the same time are positive and conceited, and afraid that they shall not sufficiently distinguish themselves, and transmit their Names to Posterity with advantage, but by broaching odd and singular Notions, and by thinking differently from the generality of Mankind; which leads them of course to oppose whatever is generally receiv'd and establish'd. And when the Doctrines which they

they set themselves to overthrow, are such as curb and cross the corrupt and inordinate Desires of Nature, and their own Doctrines come recommended by giving full Liberty and Indulgence to the irregular Appetites of Men, and by lessening their Apprehensions of a future Account, it is not to be wonder'd that they gain Profelytes.

VII. *When a Revelation is sufficiently attested to come from God, let it not weaken your Faith, if you cannot clearly see the fitness and expedience of every part of it.* This would be, to make you selves as knowing as God; whose Wisdom is infinite, and the Depth of whose Dispensations, with the Reasons and Ends of them, are not to be fathom'd by our short and narrow Comprehensions. God has given us sufficient Capacity to know him, and to learn our Duty, and to judge when a Revelation comes from him; which is all the Knowledge that is needful to us in our present State. And it is the greatest Folly as well as Presumption in any Man, to enter into the Counsels of God, and to make himself a Judge of the Wisdom of his Dispensations to such a degree, as to conclude that this or that Revelation *cannot* come from God, because he cannot see in every respect the *fitness* and *reasonableness* of it: to say, for instance, that either we had no need of a Redeemer, or that a better method might have been contriv'd for our Redemption; and upon the whole, not to give God leave to save us in his own way. In these cases, the true Inference is, that the Revelation is therefore wise, and good, and just, and fit to be receiv'd and submitted to by us, because we have sufficient Reason to believe that it comes from God. For so far he has made us competent Judges,

Judges, inasmuch as Natural Reason informs us what are the proper Evidences of a Divine Revelation ; but he has not let us into the *springs* of his Administration, nor shown us the whole compass of it, nor the connexion of the several parts with one another ; nor, by consequence, can we be capable to judge adequately of the fitness of the *Means* which he makes use of to attain the *Ends*. On the contrary, the *attempting* to make *such* a judgment, is to set our selves in the place of God, and to forget that we are frail men ; that is, short-sighted and ignorant Creatures, who know very little of divine matters, further than it has pleas'd God to reveal them to us.

VIII. *Suffer not yourselves to be drawn from the more plain and direct Proofs of the Truth of Christianity, to Proofs, which however good, are less obvious to common Capacities.* This is an Artifice usual with Writers who engage in a bad cause ; to labour, in the first Place, to fix the Merits of the Cause they oppose, upon some point which either has little relation to it, or at least is not the *main* point ; and then to run into such Proofs as are most remote and intricate ; and both these, on purpose to draw the Reader's attention from the true state of the Case, and from the Proofs which are most plain, strong and direct. There are many sorts of Proofs, by which the truth of Christianity is supported ; as 1, TYPES. 2, PROPHECIES. 3, The GENERAL EXPECTATION of Christ's coming at that time. 4, The MIRACLES he wrought. 5, His PREDICTIONS of his own Death, and Resurrection, and of many other Events, which were punctually fulfilled : and 6, The speedy and wonderful PROPAGATION of the Gospel, after his Death.

Death. But all these, tho' in themselves cogent and conclusive, are not equally *plain* and *clear* to every Capacity.

1. The **TYPES** which the Christian Writers of all Ages have insisted on, as prefiguring a *suffering Saviour*, could not be applied to Christ by the *Jews* who lived *before* his coming, because they expected a *temporal* Prince and a triumphant Saviour; but they are expressly applied to him, and represented as centring in him, by the Inspir'd Writers of the New Testament, and particularly by *St. Paul*, who receiv'd his Instructions immediately from Heaven. The Paschal Lamb, for instance, which was slain every Year at the Feast of the Passover, and was by God's special appointment to be *without Blemish*, and to be slain only at *Jerusalem*, and the *bones of it not to be broken*; was most manifestly a Type of our Saviour's Death; which, besides an agreement in the circumstances already mention'd, was on the very same day, and on the very same part of the day, that the Paschal Lamb was appointed to be slain; and, by a signal Providence, a Bone of him was not broken; tho' it was a known custom to break the Bones of those who were crucified, and the Bones of the two who were crucified with him were actually broken. Well then might *John* the Baptist say to the People, *Behold the Lamb of God*; and *St. Paul* style him, *Christ our Passover*; and *St. Peter* speak of him, *as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot*.

Exod. xii.

5.
Deut. xvi.

5, 6.

Exod. xii.

46.

Numb. ix.

12.

John i.

29.

1 Cor. v. 7.

1 Pet. i.

19.

2. In like manner, the **PROPHECIES** of the Old Testament, as foretelling the Time, Place and other circumstances of the Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Messiah, with many
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particulars concerning the nature of his kingdom, and the times of it, are not only applied to him by the inspired Writers of the New Testament, and by the succeeding Christians in all ages, but were so applied by the ancient Jewish Writers themselves, long before the coming of Christ into the World. From whence arose that *general Expectation* of his coming at that time, which we find attested by the concurring Evidence of Jewish, Christian, and Heathen Writers.

That a Messiah was *promised* in the Law and the Prophets, and that this was universally believ'd and acknowledg'd by the *Jews*, appears by the whole tenor of St. *Paul's* and St. *Peter's* Discourses to them, as they are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Where we see plainly, the only Point in dispute between them and the *Jews*, was, Whether or no that Promise was *fulfill'd* in our Saviour? For as the Apostles constantly reason'd with them from the Prophecies and Predictions of the Old Testament, so all their Reasonings were to prove, that they were *fulfill'd* in him. We do not find, that any doubt was rais'd by the *Jews*, whether the passages quoted from those Books, had been rightly applied to a Messiah by their own Teachers, or whether the Expectation there was of a great Deliverer was well founded in the Scriptures; the only thing, which, the *Jews* themselves being Judges, wanted to be prov'd, was, that those Scriptures were rightly applied by the Apostles to *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, whom their Rulers had put to death, but who by the Power of God was rais'd again to life; of which the Apostles were eye-witnesses, and the truth of their testimony was confirm'd

confirm'd by the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the Holy-Ghost. This was the great point in their Reasonings with the Jews, 'To prove that Jesus was the Person promis'd; for which they made their Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and did it with great Success. At *Thessalonica*, where was a Acts xvii. 1, 2, 3. Synagogue of the Jews, St. Paul went in unto them, as his manner was, and three Sabbath-days reason'd with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffer'd, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto, is Christ. At *Damascus*, he confounded the Jews which Acts ix. 22. dwelt there, proving that this is the very Christ. So, in the Synagogue at *Berea*, he Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12a reason'd with them out of the Scriptures; and it is said in commendation of the Jews there, that they receiv'd the word with all readiness of mind, and search'd the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Of the same kind was his Discourse with the Jews at *Antioch*; Acts xiii. 16, 17, 23, 27, 32, 33. Of this man's (David's) Seed, hath God according to his Promise, rais'd unto Israel, a Saviour, Jesus: — Because they knew him not (viz. Christ,) nor yet the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. — The Promise which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfill'd the same to us their Children, in that he hath rais'd up Jesus again; according to what was prophesied by David and Isaiah, which is there set forth at large. Thus also he defends himself before Felix, This I confess unto thee, that Acts xxiv. 14. after the way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets: and

Acts xxvi. before Festus and Agrippa, I am judg'd for the
 6, 22, 27, hope of the Promise made of God unto our Fa-
 28. thers.—Having obtain'd help of God, I continue
 unto this day; witnessing both to small and great,
 saying none other things, than those which the
 Prophets and Moses did say should come.—King
 Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that
 thou believest; To which Agrippa replied, Al-
 most thou perswadest me to be a Christian. And
 when he was at Rome, he explained and te-
 stified to the Jews who came to him, the king-
 dom of God; perswading them concerning Jesus,
 both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the
 Prophets, from morning 'till evening.

The Acts of the Apostles give the like Account
 of St. Peter, who, on the Day of Pentecost,
 preach'd to the Jews upon the Evidence of the
 Scriptures, with such Success, that great numbers
 gladly received his word, and the same day there
 were added to them about three thousand Souls.
 And a little after, upon his healing an impotent
 Man in Solomon's Porch, and the People's run-
 ning together to him, we have another Decla-
 ration of his to the same purpose: Those things
 which God beforehand had shewed by the mouth of
 all his Prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath
 so fulfilled.—Whom the Heaven must receive,
 until the time of Restitution of all things, which
 God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Pro-
 phets, since the World began. For Moses truly
 said unto the Fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord
 your God raise up unto you: Yea, and all the Pro-
 phets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as
 many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these
 Days.—And many which heard the Word, be-
 lieved, and the number of the men was about six
 thousand. Again, in his Speech to Cornelius,
 and

and his Company. — *Him (Jesus) God raised* Acts x. 42, up — *and commanded us to preach to the people, and* 43. *to testifie, that it is he which was ordain'd of God,* *to be the Judge of quick and dead; to him give all* *the Prophets witness.*

The same Appeal to the Scriptures is made by St. Stephen: *This is that Moses, which said* Acts vii, *unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the* 37, 52. *Lord your God raise up unto you. — Which of the* *Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? and* *they have slain them which shewed before of the* *coming of the just One, of whom you have been now* *the betrayers and murderers. And Philip converts* *the Treasurer of Queen Candace, whom he found* Acts viii, *reading the 53d Chapter of Isaiah, by begin-* 30. *ning at that Scripture, and preaching to him Je-* *sus; upon which he believ'd, and was baptiz'd.* *And of Apollos it is said, that he was an eloquent* Acts xviii, *man, and mighty in the Scriptures; and that he* 24, 25. *mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly,* *shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ.*

This then was the Reasoning of the Apostles, and other holy Men, in order to the Conversion of the Jews; and it is no other, than what St. Paul learnt by immediate Revelation; for he 1 Cor. xv, *tells the Corinthians, that he deliver'd to them,* 3. *that which he receiv'd, how that Christ died for* *our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he* *was buried, and that he rose again the third day,* *according to the Scriptures; and the other Apo-* *stles were instructed in the same way of reason-* *ing by our Saviour himself, who a little before* Lukexviii, *his Passion, took to him the Twelve, and said* 31, 34. *unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and* *all things that are written in the Prophets concern-* *ing the Son of Man, shall be accomplished. But* *then they understood none of these things; and there-* *fore,*

fore, after his Resurrection, he open'd their understandings; first, of two of them, whom he Luke xxiv. met going to Emmaus, O fools, and slow of 25, 26, 27. heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself; Luke xxiv. and then of the Eleven, These are the Words 42, 45, 46. which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, 47. that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then open'd he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preach'd in his name among all Nations.

Such frequent Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, plainly suppose the Promise of a Messiah; and the Success they had, notwithstanding the Prejudices the Jews were under against a Suffering Messiah, shows the propriety and efficacy of this Argument in order to the conviction of that People, to whom the Promise was made, and whose earnest desire and expectation of a Deliverer had led them of course to be familiarly acquainted with the Prophecies concerning him.

But because the Evidence arising from particular Types and Prophecies, is now by length of Time, and distance of Place, and change of Customs, become obscure and difficult to the generality of People, and cannot be thoroughly discuss'd without a great variety of knowledge concerning

concerning the ancient Jewish Customs, and the Authority of their Writings, and the exact Calculations of Time; All which require much Study, and leave room to ill-minded Men to dispute and cavil, and to perplex Readers who are unacquainted with the Learning and History of former Ages: For these reasons, the Promoters of Infidelity might well hope to find their account in resting the *whole* Evidence of Christianity upon the Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament; partly to furnish wicked minds with Objections, and fill weak minds with Doubts; and partly to draw and divert Mankind from attending to the more *plain, strong, and direct* Evidences of the Truth of Christianity.

To avoid this Snare, fix your Mind steadfastly upon the Testimony of *Facts* which are undeniable, and upon *Consequences* flowing from them, which are plain and obvious to the meanest Capacities.

3. As to the *Facts* contain'd in the New Testament; they have the fullest Testimony, that any ancient History can have: ' They are transmitted to us by persons who were Eye-witnesses of them, or at least Contemporary with those that were so, of whom they had diligently enquir'd. ' Persons, to whom no Fraud, Insincerity, or Immorality of any kind, was ever objected: ' So far from being suspected of *Design* or *Contrivance*, that they were despis'd both by *Jew* and *Gentile*, as simple and ignorant Men; ' Not mov'd by any prospect of Riches, Honours, or other temporal Advantage, but on the contrary expos'd to continual Persecutions upon the single account of their giving Testimony to those Facts; in which, notwithstanding, they persever'd to the last, and were ready

dy to seal the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood, as we are assur'd several of them did. Nor can there be the least doubt, whether those were the very Persons, who recorded the Facts as convey'd to us; since we find the Books by which they have been convey'd, expressly ascrib'd to them, and frequently cited under their Names, by the Writers of the very next Age, and of every Age since; and not only receiv'd as such by the several Christian Churches, but admitted both by Jews and Heathens in their Writings against Christianity. We also find, by the numerous Passages which they cite from them, and by the early Translations of the Books themselves into several Languages, that they are the same with those we now have; and are moreover assur'd, that the Original Writings of several of them were preserv'd for some Ages, and frequently appeal'd to by the Christians, in their Disputes with Hereticks. These are the known Evidences, to prove that any ancient Book, whether sacred or profane, was really written by the Person whose Name it bears; and it appears by what has been said, that they may be applied with greater strictness and justice to the New Testament, than to any other ancient Writing whatsoever; particularly, in the point of so many persons laying down their Lives, in Testimony of the Truth of the Doctrines and Facts contain'd in them.

4. As to the *Consequences* from those Facts, and the Application of them in order to satisfy yourselves concerning the Truth of Christianity; begin with the GENERAL EXPECTATION there was of a Messiah or great Prophet and Deliverer, about the Time that our Saviour came. And
for

for the Proof of this, you need go no further, than the Writings of the Evangelists: It is said of Simeon, a just and devout Man, *that he* Luke ii. *was waiting for the Consolation of Israel.* Anna²⁵, 38. the Prophets *spake of Jesus to all them that look'd for Redemption in Jerusalem.* Upon the appearing of John the Baptist, *the People* Luke iii. *were in Expectation, and all men mused in their* 15. *Hearts, whether he was the Christ, or not.* The Message from John to Christ was, *art thou he* Mat. xi. 3. *that should come? Art thou that Prophet? An-* drew tells his Brother, *We have found the Mes-* John i. *siah, i. e. the Christ.* The People, seeing the⁴¹ Miracle of the Loaves, say, *This is of a Truth,* John v. 14. *that Prophet that should come into the World.* John vii. At another time, it is said by the People, *Of a* 40, 41. *truth, this is the Prophet: This is the Christ.* The Woman of Samaria saith, *I know that Mes-* John iv. *siah cometh, which is called Christ.* The Peo-²⁵ ple say, *Do the Rulers know indeed, that this is the very Christ?* The Jews come about Jesus, John. x. and ask him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt?* 24. *If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* Martha saith to Jesus, *I believe that thou art the Christ,* John xi. *the Son of God, which should come into the World.* 27. And the High-Priest adjures him to declare, Mat. xxvi. *Whether he was the Christ, the Son of God.* 63.

These are Facts, which plainly shew that there was among the Jews at that Time a general Expectation of a Messiah; and this Expectation could arise from nothing but a known and general Agreement among them, that *that* was the Time which their Prophets had fixed for his coming. And even the Evasion of the Modern Jews, that *two* Messiahs were foretold, one Suffering, and the other Triumphant, is an Argument from the Mouth of an Adversary,

that a *Messiah* which was foretold by their Prophets, is already come; inasmuch, as they find it impossible to apply many passages which their own Writers before the Coming of Christ expressly apply'd to the Messiah, to any person but a Messiah in a low and suffering Condition.

5. But let your chief Regard and Attention be to the Testimony of MIRACLES; those mighty Works which were wrought by Christ and his Apostles. For this is in its nature a more sure, plain and easy Proof; which the meanest Capacities are capable of apprehending and entering into; and which therefore was evidently intended to be the principal means of convincing all Mankind of the Truth of Christianity. To deny that our Saviour wrought many and great Miracles, on all Occasions, during the whole Course of his Ministry, before Multitudes of People, in the Presence of Enemies as well as Friends, with a bare Word, and with real and permanent Effects, is to deny the Evidence of Sense, and to destroy at once the Truth of all History whatsoever; and in this Particular it is to deny that which the bitterest Enemies of Christianity of old had not the Hardiness to deny. To say (as the *Jews* did) that those Miracles were wrought by the Assistance of Evil Spirits, is to fall into the Absurdities with which our Saviour justly charges them, *viz.* ‘ That Satan casts out Satan: ‘ That a Person whose Life was most holy, and his Doctrine divine, pure, and heavenly, was all the while carrying on the Work of the Devil; and, ‘ That a Preacher of Righteousness, Justice, Mercy, Charity, Truth, Meekness, Patience and Peace, could be enabled to work Miracles by any Power, but what was Divine.

And

And therefore we find, that Christ himself often *appeals* to his *Works*, or the Miracles wrought by him, as full and convincing Testimonies of his coming from God. For Instance, It is said of *John* the Baptist, that he wrought no Miracles; upon which our Saviour argues thus with the *Jews*: *I have greater Witness than that of John the Baptist; for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me that the Father hath sent me.* At another Time, when the *Jews* came about him and said, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly;* his Answer was, *I told you and ye believed not; the Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witness of me; and again to the same Effect, If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works; and in another Place, Believe me for the very Works Sake.* And a little before his Ascension, he tells his Disciples, *Ye shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the utmost Parts of the Earth.* Agreeably to which St. Mark tells us, that they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following. And it is said in the *Acts*, that the Lord gave Testimony unto the Word of his Grace, (i. e. the Gospel) and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their hands. The Miracles they were enabled to work, were the proper and standing Evidences of the Truth of their Doctrine.

Nor does Christ only *appeal* to his Works, and enable his Apostles to do Signs and Wonders in order to the Propagation of the Gospel, but

he grounds the great Guilt of the *Jews* who rejected him, on their having seen his Works, and yet not been convinced by them: *If I had not done among them the Works which none other Man did, they had not had Sin*: And elsewhere he upbraids the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not. And the Apostle to the *Hebrews* reasons thus: *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost?* On the other Hand, we are told by St. *John*, that when Christ was in *Jerusalem*, at the Passover, many believed in his Name, *When they saw the Miracles which he did*. And *Nicodemus* a Ruler of the *Jews* addresses himself thus to Christ, *We know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do those Miracles that thou dost, except God be with him*. Again, *Many of the People believed on him, and said, when Christ cometh will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done?* And in another place, the Multitude who were fed with the Loaves, when they had seen the Miracles which Jesus did, said, *This is of a Truth that Prophet which should come into the World*. And when the Chief Priests and Pharisees had assembled a Council to consider what they should do, their reasoning was this: *What do we? For this Man doth many Miracles. If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him*. Upon which, St. *Peter* might well say, *Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye your selves also know*. These

These Appeals which our Saviour makes to his Miracles, together with the immediate *Convictions* wrought by them, are joint Testimonies of the Propriety and Efficacy of the Argument drawn from thence. And since Miracles could be no Testimony at all, if they were not *true* and *real*; those Appeals and Convictions are of themselves sufficient, to shew the Vanity and Wildness of a late Attempt, to prove that our Saviour's Miracles were merely *Allegorical*; in which it is hard to persuade one's self, that the Author, if in his right Mind, can be serious and in earnest. But since the Notion he has vented, is industriously made use of by Scepticks and Infidels, to stagger and perplex unwary and ignorant People, who easily see, that if Christ wrought no real Miracles, Christianity has no real Support; for their sakes, and on no other Account, I will proceed to shew the Absurdity of that Notion; without any design to convince the Author himself, who either is not in *earnest*, or not *capable* of Conviction.

What he undertakes to prove, is, that the Miracles of our Saviour as we find them in the Evangelists, however related by them as *Historical Truths* and without the least intimation that they are not to be understood literally, were not real, but merely *Allegorical*, and that they are to be interpreted, not in the literal, but only in Mystical Senses; which strange and Enthusiastical Scheme, he has pursued throughout, in a most profane and ludicrous manner. His Pretence is, that the Fathers consider'd our Saviour's Miracles in the same Allegorical way that he does; that is, as *merely* Allegorical, and exclusive of the Letter. An Assertion so notoriously

riously false, that it requires the greatest Charity to think that he himself did not know it to be so. Some of the Fathers indeed, in their Explications of Scripture to the People, of which their Sermons in those days chiefly consisted, being willing to use all means and to omit no opportunities of exciting in them a spirit of Piety and Devotion, did not confine themselves to the bare Letter, but endeavour'd upon the Foundation of the Letter, to raise spiritual Meanings, and to allegorise upon them by way of moral Application; and this, not only upon the Miracles of our Saviour, but upon almost all the Historical Facts which are recorded either in the *Old* or *New Testament*; and the same was also a receiv'd Method of Instruction among the *Jews*. But would he have us suppose, that the Primitive Fathers intended to *deny* the *literal* Facts of our Saviour's Miracles, or to make them *merely Allegorical*; when he has not produced any one Authority out of the whole Body of the Fathers of the first three hundred Years after Christ, except *Origen*, that can be pretended to countenance his excluding the *literal Sense*? He has indeed heap'd together a number of Quotations; chiefly out of the Fathers and Writers of the fourth, fifth, and following Centuries; but many of the Passages he quotes, either expressly affirm or evidently suppose the *literal* Truth of our Saviour's Miracles; and others of them tell us, that we must not *rest* in the Letter, but endeavour to find out mystical and spiritual Meanings. Now, as such Quotations are far from *denying* the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles according to the letter, they can be no manner of Service to his Cause; and therefore it is hard to say for what

what end he produced them, unless it was to amuse his English Readers with the Appearance of a great Variety of Authorities, which he must needs see were nothing to his Purpose.

And as to *Origen* himself; tho' he went further into the Allegorical way than any other, yet so far was he from not believing and allowing our Saviour's Miracles in the *literal* Sense, that in many parts of his Book against *Celsus*, which consists not of popular Discourses, but of just and sober Reasonings, he directly argues from them in Defence of Christianity.

“ In answer to *Celsus's* Boastings of the Precepts and Discipline of the *Greeks*, he urges, that Christianity has a more divine Demonstration, which the Apostle calls the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of *Power*; and he explains *Power* to be the *Miracles* of Christ; which, says he, we believe to have been wrought, as from many other Arguments, so particularly from this, that the *Footsteps* of the same Power do still appear. In several places, he takes notice of *Celsus's* ascribing the Miracles of our Saviour to *Art Magick*; and having particularly mention'd the restoring of Lunaticks, casting out Devils and curing Diseases, in the Name of Christ, he adds, that *Celsus* not being able to resist the Evidences arising from the wonderful Works wrought by him, of which those he nam'd were a few out of many, ascrib'd them to *Art Magick*; and then he shews at large the Absurdity of that Supposition. He takes notice, that both *Moses* and *Jesus* did wonderful works, and such as exceeded human Power, and then expostulates with the *Jews* for believing the Things which *Moses* wrought though recorded singly by himself, and rejecting the

Lib. 1. p.
5. Edit.
Spenc.

Lib. 1. p.
7, 30, 34.
53.

Lib. 1. p.
53.
Lib. 1. p.
34.

Miracles

Miracles of Christ, upon the Testimony of his Disciples; while the Christians, as he adds, were the more ready to believe the Miracles of Christ as recorded by his Disciples, on account of the Prophecy of *Moses* concerning him.

Lib. 1. p. 34. He argues for the Reality of the Descent of the Holy-Ghost upon our Saviour, from the *Miracles* which he wrought, and mentions the casting out Devils, and the curing Diseases, in

Lib. 2. p. 87, 88. *his own Time*, as one Argument of the Truth of those Miracles. In proof that Jesus was the Son of God, he urges his healing the Lame and the Blind, according to the Prophecy concerning him; and then proceeds to shew the Reality of what the Evangelists relate concerning his raising Persons from the Dead, and why he rais'd no more; and adds, that his Miracles were intended, not only to be *Figures* or *Symbols*, but also the Means of converting Multitudes to the Christian Faith; thereby plainly acknowledging the *literal* as well as the *allegorical*

Lib. 2. p. 91, 92. meaning: He proves the Truth of Christ's Miracles, from others *attempting* to work the like; and makes the same difference between *their* Works and Christ's, that there was between the Miracles of *Moses* and the Magicians, and says, that a *Jew* who defends the Miracles of *Moses*, is as perverse as the *Egyptians*, if

Lib. 2. p. 91, 92. he reject those of Christ.—“He speaks of the Miracles of *Moses* and *Christ*, as converting whole Nations; and observes that Christ was to overthrow the Customs, in which the People had been educated, and to deal with a Nation that had been taught to require *Signs* and *Wonders*, and therefore had at least as great need to shew them, in order to gain belief, as *Moses*, who had not those Difficulties

to overcome.——“ He says; that whoever Lib. 3.
should embrace the Christian Religion, was P. 128.
required by Christ and his Disciples, to believe
his Divinity and *Miracles*.——“ He speaks of Lib. 7.
the wonderful Works of Christ (howsoever dis- P. 368
believed by *Celsus*) as the Effects of a divine
Power. And, as to the Apostles, he shews Lib. 1.
how absurd it would have been in them, to at- p. 30, 34
tempt the Introducing and Establishing a new
Doctrine in the World, without the Help of
Miracles.

Judge now, whether *Origen* ought to be pro-
duc'd as one who did not believe the Miracles
of Christ, according to the *literal* Sense, and
as *full* and *proper* Testimonies of the Truth of
the Christian Religion; and let this Instance
convince you, how unsafe it is to take the Opi-
nion of the Fathers, or of any other Writers,
from *particular* Passages and Expressions which
may be *pick'd* out of them, without attending
to the Occasions upon which they were writ-
ten, or comparing them with the other Works
of the same Authors. A Liberty, which has been
much us'd of late; and, if allow'd, would put it
in the Power of designing Men to make almost
any Writer speak what Opinion they please.

At the same Time it must be own'd, that
Origen, and some others, indulged themselves
further in the Allegorical Way, than was con-
sistent with sober Reasoning and sound Judg-
ment; for which, He in particular was greatly Huet. *Origen*
blam'd, both in his own Time, and by many *geniana*,
of the Fathers of the succeeding Ages. But p. 170
their Intentions were certainly pious: and it
could not be imagin'd, that there ever would be
such a Man in the World, who should make it
a Question, whether any Father believed the

Facts *literally* understood, who in his Defence of the Christian Religion against *Jews* and *Heathens*, appealed to the Miracles of our Saviour in their *plain* and *literal* Sense, as the great Evidence of his being sent from God. And as they practised the Allegorical Method, not only in the Point of *Miracles*, but in almost all the Historical Parts of the Old and New Testament, they are as good Authorities for entirely destroying the whole Historical Truth of both, as that of Miracles.

Tho' therefore it were granted, that all the ancient Fathers of the Church had unanimously indulg'd themselves more or less in the Allegorical Meanings; it would not at all help this Writer, unless he could make it clear, that they also *deny'd* the literal Meaning; and to say that any one who urged the Miracles of our Saviour as the great Vindication of Christianity, could at the same Time deny the *literal* Sense of them, is a flat Contradiction; since, as I observed before, Miracles can be no Evidence at all in any other Meaning, but the literal. Much less will he find any Thing in the Fathers, to countenance that *ludicrous* and *blasphemous* Way, in which he has treated Christ and his Miracles.

The Truth is, the Supposition of an Allegorical and Mystical Meaning, exclusive of the *literal*, carries in it so many strange Absurdities, that nothing could lead any one into it, but either great Weakness of Understanding, or great Disorder of Mind, or very strong Prejudices against the Christian Religion. For Instance; 'That when Christ appeal'd to his Works, as he often did, to prove his Divine Mission, he meant only *allegorical* and not real Works;

Works; ' That when the People asked one another, whether the Messiah *when he came, would do greater works than these*, they did not mean real, but only *imaginary* Works; ' That when Christ bad the Disciples of *John* the Baptist tell their Master, what Cures they had seen him work, in order to satisfy him that he was the Messiah, as working the same Cures which the Prophets had foretold the Messiah should work, neither the Prophets nor Christ meant *real* Cures; ' That the great Number of *Jews* who were converted upon seeing Christ heal the Sick, and raise to Life those who had been Dead, did not see them first to be Sick or Dead, and then alive or whole again, and so had no real Ground for their Conversion; ' That when the Multitudes came to be heal'd, upon their having seen the Miraculous Cures that Christ had wrought upon others, they had really seen *nothing*, to induce and encourage them to come to him; ' That when the Leper came back to thank our Saviour, he was not really heal'd, but came to return Thanks for *nothing*; ' That when the People were amaz'd to see the Miracles he did, they were amaz'd at *nothing*; ' That when the *Jews* fear'd the Success of his Miracles, and call'd a Council to prevent it, they were afraid only of Shadows, and consulted about *nothing*; ' That when they persecuted him and sought to slay him, for healing a Lame Man on the Sabbath-day, he had really wrought *no* Cure; ' That when the People intended to make him a *King*, on Account of his extraordinary Works, they had seen no Works, but what any other Man might have done; ' That when it was urg'd by the *Jews*, that he wrought Miracles by the Help of *Beelzebub*,

any Thing could have driven them to that Shift, but that they knew the *facts themselves* to be real and undeniable; ‘ That when the People were fill’d with *wonder* and *amazement* at the Cure of the Lame Man which was wrought by St. Peter, they did not see *him* leaping and walking, who before was laid daily at the Gate of the Temple to ask Alms; and when the Council could say nothing against it, nor could deny that a *notable Miracle* had been done, no such Thing as a Miracle had been wrought, but both *Council* and *People* were deceived; ‘ That when *Simon Magus* desir’d to purchase the Power of bestowing the Holy Ghost, he meant to purchase no Power but what he had before; ‘ That when the People of *Lystra* accounted *Paul* and *Barnabas* to be Gods, they saw nothing in them more than common Men; ‘ That when the People out of every Nation were fill’d with Wonder, to hear the Apostles speak every one in their own proper Language, there was really nothing to be wonder’d at; ‘ That the Conversions made in all Nations by the Apostles, of great as well as small, learned as well as unlearned, were all made by them without giving any real Testimony of a Divine Mission; ‘ That when the Writers of the Church asserted the Truth of Christianity upon the Evidence of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, the *Jews* and *Heathens*, against whom they wrote, if they could have call’d in Question the Reality of those Miracles, would not have fix’d their Foot there, but put themselves to the Difficulty of inventing *other Causes* than a *divine Power* to which they might ascribe them: In a Word, ‘ That the whole History of the Old and New Testament, which

which is all equally capable of being run into Allegory and Mystery by Enthusiastical heads, has no Meaning at all, but such as every one shall think fit to Allegorise it into, by the mere strength of fancy and imagination.

These are some of the shocking Absurdities, which attend that wild Imagination of Miracles wholly Mystical and Allegorical, and without a *literal* meaning. And as to the *Blasphemous Manner* in which a late Writer has taken the liberty to treat our Saviour's Miracles and the Author of them; though I am far from contending, that the Grounds of the Christian Religion, and the Doctrines of it, may not be discuss'd at all times, in a calm, decent, and serious way (on the contrary, I am very sure, that the more fully they are discuss'd, the more firmly they will stand,) yet I cannot but think it the Duty of the Civil Magistrate at all times, to take care that Religion be not treated either in a *ludicrous*, or a *reproachful* manner, and effectually to discourage such Books and Writings, as strike equally at the Foundation of all Religion, and of Truth, Virtue, Seriousness, and good Manners; and by consequence at the Foundation of Civil Society.

6. But to return. To the Miracles of our Saviour, we may well add, as further Testimonies of a Divine Power, his PREDICTIONS of many Events, which were afterwards punctually fulfilled; ' That he should suffer at *Jerusalem*; Luke xiii. 33. 34. That there he should be betray'd unto the chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, who would condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mock'd, and scourg'd; That *Judas* was the Person who would betray him; Matt. xxvi. 25. That the other Disciples would forsake him; Matt. xxvi. 13. That,

Mat.xxvi. 'That, particularly, *Peter* would deny him thrice;
 34. That, as to the manner of his Death, it should
 Matt. xx. be *Crucifixion*; and that he would rise again the
 19. third Day. To which we may add, his foretel-
 ling the manner of St. *Peter's* Death, and that
 John xxi. St. *John* should live to see the Destruction of
 18, 22. *Jerusalem*; together with the Persecutions which
 Matt. x. should befall the Apostles after his Death, and
 17, 18, 19, the Mission of the Holy Ghost to comfort and
 20. enlighten them, and to enable them effectually
 Acts i. 8. to preach and propagate the Gospel.

But most remarkable to this purpose, is his
 Luke xxi. foretelling the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of
 12, 14. the whole *Jewish* Nation, with the several Cir-
 cumstances of it: as 'The *Time* of its com-
 ing, 'The destroying of the *City*, 'The demo-
 lishing of the *Temple*, 'The Judgments upon
 the *Nation* in general, 'And their final *Disper-*
sion: All which were distinctly foretold by
 Christ; and are attested by *Josephus* (an Histo-
 rian of their own Nation who liv'd at the time)
 to have punctually come to pass, according to
 the Predictions.

Mat.xxiii. As to the *Time*; our Saviour having enume-
 34. rated the dismal Calamities that were coming
 Mark xiii. upon the *Jews*, declares, *That that Generation*
 10. *should not pass, 'till all these things were fulfilled;*
 Luke xxi. and he supposes; that some at least of those to
 32. whom he spake when he enumerated the *Signs*
 Mat.xxiv. of their coming, should be then alive, *Ye, when*
 33. *ye shall see all these things, know that it is near,*
even at the Doors; and, after his Resurrection,
 John xxi. he intimates that St. *John* should live to see
 22. those terrible Judgments; which in Scripture are
 express'd by his *coming*, and which were all exe-
 cuted, according to those Predictions, in less
 than forty Years from the time they were de-
 nounced.

Next,

Next, The Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the Circumstances of it are thus foretold by our Saviour; *Thine Enemies shall cast a Trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the Ground, and thy Children within thee, and shall not leave in thee one Stone upon another.---Then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* All which was fulfilled, in **Titus's* encompassing the City with a new Fortification rais'd by the Soldiers in three Days, so that none could come out; upon which there ensu'd a most † dread-ful Famine, the ‡ stores and granaries having been burnt and consumed before, in the seditious Quarrels and Fightings among themselves under three several Factions endeavouring to devour one another. The City being taken, was * levell'd with the Ground, as if it had never been inhabited; and what by Famine, by Fire and Sword, and by their Slaughters of one another, † eleven hundred thousand *Jews* were destroyed, besides ninety seven thousand who were taken Prisoners; the *Nation* at that time being gather'd together at *Jerusalem*, to celebrate the Passover.

The particular Destruction of the *Temple* is thus foretold by our Saviour, *There shall not be left here one Stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* And *Josephus* tells us, That *Titus* order'd the Soldiers to lay the *Temple*, as well as the City, even with the Ground; and another of their Writers mentions the fact of *Turnus Rufus's* digging the very Plot of Ground on which it stood, with a Plough-share.

The Judgments that would fall upon the *Nation* in general, are thus express'd by our Saviour:

Luke xix.
43, 44.

Mat. xxiv.
21.

* *Josephus*
of the
Jewish
Wars, l.
6. c. 13.
† c. 14.
‡ *Jos. l. 6.*
c. 1.

* *Jos. l. 7.*
c. 18.

† *Jos. l. 7.*
c. 17.

Mat. xxiv.
2.

Jos. l. 7.
c. 18.

Maimonides.

Luke xxi. Our: *These be the Days of Vengeance. There shall be great Distress in the Land, and Wrath upon this People, and they shall fall by the edge of the*

* See the Sword. Accordingly they were destroyed, * to the Number of two hundred Thousand and upwards, in several Sieges, Battles, &c. in the Towns and Countries; besides the grand Slaughter at Jerusalem.

The following Captivity and Dispersion of those who remain'd, was also foretold by our

Luke xxi. Saviour: *They shall be led away Captive into all Nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

Accordingly Josephus, after he has describ'd the taking of Jerusalem, speaks of them

as a People dispers'd over the Face of the Earth; and particularly tells us, that the most graceful

of the Captives were reserv'd by Titus to be part of his Triumph; that, of the Remainder, those above seventeen Years of Age, were sent into Egypt in Chains, to be employ'd in servile Offices; and others of them were sent into several Provinces for the use of the Theaters and publick Shows; and that all under seventeen Years of Age, were expos'd to Sale. And ever since, to this Day, they have been, and still continue, a People dispers'd and scatter'd among the Nations of the Earth, without either Temple, or City, or Government of their own.

These Particulars concerning our Saviour's Death, and the state and condition of his Disciples and of the Jewish Nation, consequent upon it, are Events which he foretold, and which we find to have punctually come to pass, partly from the Accounts of our own Scriptures, and partly from a Jewish Historian of undoubted Credit and Authority. And that

his Predictions, when fulfill'd, were intended by him to be Proofs of his being the Messiah, we may gather from his own Declarations. Having told his Disciples that Judas should betray him, he presently adds, *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.* And after the Predictions of his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, he says, *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe, i. e.* says Dr. Hammond, *That your seeing my Prediction fulfilled, may convince you, that all which I have said to you is true, and so make you believe on me.* To the same Purpose, is that which he subjoins to his Account of the Persecutions that would befall his Disciples after his Death, *These things I have told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

7. From the Predictions of our Saviour, and the fulfilling of them, carry your Thoughts to the speedy and wonderful PROPAGATION of the GOSPEL; and there also you will see the clearest Evidences of a Divine Power: A few obscure and illiterate Men, without Art or Eloquence, making head against the ancient Religions of Kingdoms and Countries, and all the while professing themselves to be the Messengers of one who had been despis'd, and ill treated, and at last crucified, in his own Country; and yet, under these Disadvantages, prevailing with Multitudes every where to be his Disciples, and to embrace his Religion; and this, notwithstanding the Contrariety of its Doctrines to the Lusts, Passions and Prejudices of Mankind, and the fierce Opposition it met with from the Powers of the World, and the terrible Persecutions

which for some Time were almost the certain Portion of the Professors of it; without any Encouragement to undergo them, but what was *future and out of Sight*. In these Circumstances, nothing could lead them to *attempt* the Propagation of it with any *hope* of Success, but a Promise of divine Assistance, and their firm Reliance upon it; nothing could have given them such Success, but a *divine Power* working with them; nor can any Thing account for so many Persons sealing the Doctrine with their Blood, in so many different Parts of the World, but an absolute Assurance of the Truth of what they taught, and a future Reward for their Labour and Sufferings.

They who require greater Testimonies of a divine Mission and Power, than those I have mention'd under this eighth general Head, are never to be satisfied. But, on the other Hand, when an honest and impartial Mind has satisfied it self, upon those Evidences, that our Saviour and his Apostles had a divine Mission, and that they wrought many and great Miracles, and foretold Events by a Power and Inspiration evidently Divine; it follows that the Doctrines, for the propagating of which they were sent, and for the Confirmation of which those extraordinary Powers and Gifts were bestow'd must undoubtedly be true, as coming from God and attested by him. Particularly, their divine Mission and Power being first establish'd, their express and repeated Declarations that *Jesus was the Messiah*, become to us a full and irresistible Proof of the Truth of it. And when Question arises, whether or no this or that Prophecy in the *Old Testament*, this or that Type in the *Jewish Law*, had a Reference to the Mes-

rah who was to come, and were actually fulfilled in Christ; it is easy to determine with your selves, whether you ought to listen to Persons divinely inspir'd, who affirm they had a Reference to Christ, or to Persons who pretend to no such Inspiration, and would persuade you that they had not.

The Evidence arising from ancient Types and Prophecies, has (as I told you before) been fully consider'd, and clear'd from the Cavils and Objections of Infidels, by several very *Learned Men*; it being the proper Province of such, to follow the Adversary through all the Intricacies of the *Jewish* Learning, and the contemporary Histories, Customs and Modes of Speaking and Writing. But as Persons who are unacquainted with these Things, and incapable of entering minutely into such Enquiries, may easily be misled and impos'd upon by artful and designing Men; so I have shewn you under this Head, that you need not enter into them, but may receive full and clear Satisfaction from Evidences much more plain and direct, which lie equally open to all Capacities, and are perfectly well calculated for the Conviction of all, if there be but an honest and unprejudic'd Mind. And whoever shall affirm, that these are not a full and sufficient Ground of Conviction without a critical Enquiry into Types and Prophecies, must affirm at the same Time that no Part of the Heathen World, who were all equally unacquainted with the *Jewish* Dispensation, could receive and embrace the Christian Faith upon a just and reasonable Foundation; and by Consequence, that all who did receive and embrace it, however wise and learned in other Respects (which was the known Character

of many of them) were, in that particular, *Fools and Ideots*: Or rather, he must affirm, that it is *impossible* for God to make any Revelation at all, that can rationally be believ'd.

But because Practice (as I have observ'd under the three first Heads) has so great an Influence upon Principle, and it is to little Purpose to convince the *Mind* of the Truth of the Christian Religion, unless the *Will* and *Affections* be preserv'd in a right Disposition, and carefully guarded as well against the many Allurements to Vice and Profaneness which we see in the World, as against the Arts and Endeavours of wicked Men to break down the *Fences* of Religion; I will add one general Direction, which being duly attended to, will be a constant *Guard* against all such Attempts and Allurements; and, by preserving your Hearts in a Christian Disposition, will at the same Time prepare them to continue stedfast in the Christian Faith.

IX. And the Rule is this, *That you be careful to preserve upon your Minds a serious Regard and Reverence to Things SACRED*; that is, to every thing that bears a Relation to God and his Religion, particularly his *Word*, his *Name*, his *Day*, his *House* and *Ordinances*, and his *Ministers*. For these are visible Memorials of God upon Earth; and, as they are the standing Means of maintaining an Intercourse between God and Man, a serious Regard to *them* is a necessary Means of keeping up in the Mind an habitual Reverence of God. On the contrary, there is not a more evident Testimony of a corrupt and deprav'd Disposition, than an irreverent Treatment of Things Sacred, a Contempt of any Thing that carries on it a divine Impressi-

on,

on, or an obstinate Neglect of any of those Ordinances which the Wisdom of God has appointed, to support and preserve his Religion in the World. When therefore you hear any Person depreciating the publick Duties of Religion, and inveighing against Ordinances of all kinds, and representing publick Assemblies, and regular Ministers for the Administration of those Ordinances, to be useless, or at least unnecessary; you have great reason to suspect, that their *final* aim is, by bringing these into Disuse and Contempt, to banish Christianity out of the Nation. And by the same Rule, whoever is seriously concern'd to preserve our Religion, and to maintain the Honour of it, must take great care to preserve in himself, and propagate in others, a constant and serious Regard to every thing that bears a Relation to God, and to consider it as *Sacred* on that account. Particularly,

1. As to the WORD of God; Whatever we find deliver'd by the Prophets in the *Old Testament*, or by Christ and his Apostles in the *New*, is always to be consider'd by us as a Message from God to Men; and whoever considers it as such, cannot fail of paying it the highest Regard and Reverence; much less can he fail of expressing, on all occasions, his abhorrence of making it the subject of Wit and Jestings, and of raising Mirth from unserious Allusions to the Language or Matter of it; which, however usual in loose Company and among unthinking People, is a very great degree of Impiety and Prophaneness. As the Scriptures contain the Will of God, they are certainly entitled to your most serious Regard; and the most proper

proper Testimony of your Regard, is, to read them frequently and with Attention; to have recourse to them as your great Rule of Duty, and the Treasure out of which religious Knowledge of every kind is to be mainly drawn. In them, you find a continued Mixture of Precepts, Promises and Threatnings; first, to shew you your Duty and to remind you of it, and then to quicken and encourage you in the Performance of it. And, together with these, you see the many Examples of pious and good Men, and the numerous Testimonies of God's Favour to the Righteous, and his Judgments upon the Wicked. In the same Sacred Books, you behold the various Dispensations of God in the successive Ages of the World, and the glorious Scenes of Providence, opening by degrees, and succeeding one another in a regular Order, and at last centring in the Messiah. And, by observing the *several ways* in which God has reveal'd himself to Mankind, you clearly see the Excellencies of the Christian Revelation above all others, in the Purity it requires, and the Rewards it proposes. In these and the like ways, do the Holy Scriptures at once delight and edifie all those who attend to them, and are conversant with them, and who regard and reverence them as the Sacred Oracles of God.

2. In like manner, the NAME of God is to be esteem'd Sacred, in order to preserve upon the Mind an habitual Honour and Reverence to God himself; by not using it otherwise than seriously, and not mixing it with our ordinary Conversation, and much less prostituting it to Oaths, and Curses, and Imprecations. Such a profane use of his Name, insensibly takes off the Veneration that is due to his Being; and by

making

making him less and less fear'd, emboldens Men to be more and more Wicked; and is accordingly seldom heard, but in loose Company and among Men of profligate Lives. Wherefore, be careful to abstain from a common and irreverent use of that Sacred Name, and of all such Expressions as signify things of a religious Nature, as our *Faith*, our *Salvation*, or the like; and not only to abstain from the undue use of them yourselves, but likewise to take all proper occasions to express your dislike and abhorrence of it in others, and especially in those who are placed under your more immediate Care.

3. The Lord's DAY is to be esteem'd Sacred, as being sanctified and set apart, for ceasing from our worldly Care and Labour, and meditating upon God, and paying that Honour and Adoration, which he requires of us, and which belongs to him, as the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of Mankind. The devout and serious Observation of this Day, is one of the most effectual means to keep alive Religion in the World, both in the outward Face of it, and in the Hearts and Lives of Christians; and nothing is more certain, than that it would quickly be lost and extinguish'd among the generality of Mankind, if it were not kept alive by the appointment of this Day, for reviving upon their Minds a Sense of God and their Duty. Wherefore let this be a Day not only of Rest from Labour, but also of Meditation upon God and heavenly things; partly, in a devout attendance upon the publick Offices of Religion, and partly by allowing a reasonable Portion of the Day to the private Duties, of reading the Holy Scripture and other good Books, and instructing your Children and Servants,

vants, and examining your own Lives, and praying to God for a Supply of your own private Necessities, Spiritual and Temporal. I say, a *reasonable* Portion of the Day, according to the *Condition* of particular Persons and Families. For they who on all *other* days are confin'd to hard Labour, or are otherwise oblig'd to a close attendance on their worldly Affairs, must be allow'd in some Measure to consider this as a Day of Ease and Relaxation from Thought and Labour, as well as a Day of Devotion; provided it be in a way that is innocent and inoffensive, and that the publick Offices of Religion be duly attended, and the Duties of a more private Nature be not neglected. But there are many others, whose Quality and Condition have freed them from the necessity of a constant attendance upon worldly Business, and to whom all other days are equally days of Ease and Diversion; and from them it may well be expected, that they abstain from their Diversions on this Day, and employ it more strictly in the Duties of Religion; for which indeed they have greater *need* than others, to arm themselves against the manifold Temptations to which they are daily expos'd by Ease and Plenty. And when they have better opportunity, and greater need, than the rest of Mankind, to give a strict attendance to the duties of Religion on this day; if they do it not, it is much to be fear'd, that they have a greater relish for the Delights and Business of this World, than for Exercises of a Spiritual Nature.

4. Next to God's Day, his House is to be accounted *Sacred*, as it is a Place set apart for the performance of religious Offices, and for the publick Administration of religious Ordinances,

nances, in which all Christians are bound to join. The Duty of *assembling* for the publick Worship of God, appears to be a necessary Part of the Christian Religion; as well from the first Institution of the Christian Church, as from the general Practice of Christians in all Ages, and all Countries. Our Saviour and his Apostles found the *Jewish* Worship every Sabbath-day regularly settled in their Synagogues, and were so far from condemning those Assemblies, that they join'd in them. After his Ascension, we read, that they who upon the preaching of the Gospel had *receiv'd the Word, continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers; and that they continued daily with one accord, in the Temple.* The Christians in particular Cities and Countries, are every where in the *New Testament* styl'd *Churches*, which properly denotes an Assembly of Persons call'd together into one Body; and we find the Apostles, ordaining *Elders* in the Churches planted by them, which *Elders* are also spoken of as *Heads* of the several Churches, and *Rulers* in them; and one Part of the Office was, to *labour in the Word and Doctrine, to take heed to the Flock, and to feed the Church.* At *Antioch*, where the Disciples were first call'd Christians, *Paul and Barnabas* assembled themselves with the Church a whole Year, and taught much People; and afterwards, we read of *Prophets and Teachers* in the Church that was at *Antioch.* In other Places of the *New Testament*, we find the first Day of the Week (the Day of our Saviour's Resurrection) spoken of as the ordinary Time of the Christian Assemblies; Upon the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread, Paul

Acts ii.
42, 46.

Acts xiv.
23.

Tit. i. 5.

Acts xi.
30. xx. 17.

28. xxi. 18.

1 Tim. v.

17.

Acts xi.
26.

Acts xiii.

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Acts xx. 7.

preached

- 1 Cor. xvi. *preached unto them.* And the same Apostle gives
 1, 2. special Direction to the Christians at *Corinth*, as
 he had done before to the Churches of *Galatia*,
That upon the first Day of the Week every one
should lay by him in store as God had prosper'd him,
that there might be no Gatherings when he came.
- 1 Cor. xi. In his first Epistle directed to the same Church,
 he lays down many Rules for holding their As-
 semblies in an orderly Manner: He first re-
 proves them for their disorderly Celebration of
 the Feast of Charity, and the Lord's Supper,
 and tells them, 'That they *came together*, not
 for the better but for the worse, 'That when they
came together in the Church, he heard there were
 Divisions among them, 'That their behaving
 themselves as if they were eating and drinking
 in their own Houses, was a *despising of the*
Church of God. After this, he proceeds to give
 them a particular Account of the Institution
 of the Lord's Supper, with the Direction of
 Christ to celebrate it in Remembrance of him;
 which he elsewhere calls the Communion of
 the Body and Blood of Christ; speaking of it
 as the Symbol of Christian Union, or the Badge
 of their Relation to Christ and to one another;
 all which is necessarily suppos'd to be perform'd
 in publick Assemblies. In the same Epistle
 (ch. xiv.) against speaking in an unknown
 Tongue, he says (ver. 16.) *How shall he that oc-*
cupieth the room of the unlearned say, Amen, at
thy giving of Thanks, seeing he understandeth not
what thou sayest? At the twenty third and
 twenty sixth Verses, he speaks of the Church
 being *come together into one Place*, and then
 gives further Directions for their more orderly
 Behaviour in their Assemblies, because, as he
 adds at the thirty third Verse, *God is not the*
Author

Author of Confusion, but of Peace, as in all Churches of the Saints; which in those Days was the common Name of Christians. At the thirty fourth Verse, The Women are enjoin'd to keep silence in the Churches; and he concludes with this general Direction, Let all things be done decently and in order. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Christians are first exhorted to hold Heb. x. *fast the profession of their Faith without wavering;* 23, 25. *and then, Not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, even in Times of Persecution. And that they strictly conform'd to this Apostolical Rule, we have the Testimony of Pliny a* Plin. 10. *Heathen Writer, who being Governour of a Roman Province about the Year of Christ 104, gave the Emperor an Account of what he had learn'd concerning the Christians, That they us'd to meet together on a certain Day before Light, (for fear of the Heathen Persecutors;) when they* Ep. 97. *join'd in singing a Hymn to Christ, and enter'd in a solemn Engagement not to steal, nor rob, nor commit Adultery, nor defraud; which plainly refers to the Celebration of the Eucharist. But* Apol. 2. *Justin Martyr, an ancient Father, in his Apology for the Christians about the Year of Christ 150, gives a more particular Account of their publick Worship, "That on the Day call'd* " *Sunday, all the Christians in City and Coun-* " *try assembled in one Place; where the Writings* " *of the Apostles and Prophets were read: That* " *as soon as the Reader had made an End, there* " *followed an Exhortation to the People; and* " *after that, Prayers, and the Holy Eucharist;* " *the Person who officiated, praying, and the* " *People saying Amen."* To all which we may add, That from the beginning of Christianity to this time, no Instance can be given of any

Country, in which the Christian Religion has been planted, where there has not also been Prayer and Preaching, and Administration of Sacraments, in an open and publick Manner; tho' it is known to have been planted by *several* Apostles in *several* Countries.

And it is to be hoped, that there are none among us at this Day, who hold Religious Assemblies to be useless and unnecessary, except the open or secret Enemies of Christianity; who well know, how great a Means they are to preserve a Sense of God and Religion in the World, and to improve Men in the Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life. But if there be any, who otherwise bear no ill Will to the Christian Religion, and yet are of the Number of those, who think publick Prayer, Preaching, and other Ordinances, to be Things indifferent and unnecessary; it is, because they consider not the corrupt State of Human Nature, nor the common Condition of Human Life; how strongly some are inclin'd to the *Delights* of the World, and to what Degree others are swallowed up in the *Cares* of it; how ignorant many are of their Duty, and how often it is seen, that they who know it, practise it no better than those who know it not; how little Disposition Men naturally have to Acts of Devotion, and how unmindful they are apt to be of a future State: Upon the Whole, what small Hope there is, that the Generality of Mankind would retain just Notions of God and Religion, if they were not frequently explain'd to them; or attend to their Duty, if it were not frequently inculcated upon them; or refrain from inordinate Enjoyments, if they were not frequently warn'd of the Danger of them; or be influ-
enc'd

enc'd by future Rewards and Punishments, if they were not frequently put in mind of them; or, lastly, that they would duly perform the Work of Devotion, if they were not call'd to it, and assisted in it by publick Offices and Ministers appointed for that End, and at the same time excited to Seriousness and Attention, by the Solemnity of the Work, and the Examples of their Fellow Christians. Which shews, on one hand, the Wisdom of God in providing those outward Means, to check and cure our inward Depravities; and, on the other hand, the Folly of those who in their Reasonings against Instituted Rites and Ordinances of Religion, seem to forget the Blindness and Corruption of Human Nature, or rather to suppose that Mankind are a Race of Angels, wholly freed from the Power of Temptations, and carry'd, by their own Nature, with the greatest Readiness and Chearfulness, into all the Acts of Adoration and Obedience.

Now, if publick Assemblies be necessary, the appointment of places for those Assemblies is also necessary; and as the Place becomes Sacred, by the Sacred Offices which are perform'd in it, so the true way of expressing our regard to the Place, is a Devout and Religious attendance upon the Offices; to consider, that we go to the House of God, not for fashion sake, but for the ends of Devotion and Spiritual Improvement; and accordingly to fix our Attention, and to join seriously and devoutly with the Congregation in the several parts of Divine Service. On the contrary, a wilfull neglect of the Christian Assemblies, or a careless and irreverent Behaviour in them, is a Contempt and Profanation of the House of God,

God; and favours of a Mind void of Religion.

5. As the House of God is Sacred, on account of the Religious Offices that are perform'd in it; so are the MINISTERS who perform these Offices, and who have receiv'd a regular Appointment to it, as far as they answer the Ends of such Appointment. By their hands the Holy Ordinances of the Christian Religion are administer'd, by their Tongues the Word of God is explain'd and enforc'd, and by their Ministry many other Blessings and Benefits are deriv'd to the People committed to their Care. And as to the Necessity of a regular Mission, without which no person may minister publickly in Holy things; this appears, as well from the first Institution of a Christian Church and from the constant Practice of it in all Ages, as from the endless Confusions that must unavoidably ensue, if every one might set up himself to be a publick Teacher, and intrude at pleasure into the Ministerial Office. Whether therefore we regard the Nature and Original of their Office, or the Work they are employed about; they are to be consider'd as God's Ministers; and to be received and respected under that Character, unless they forfeit their title to Respect, by living unsuitably to their Character. In which case, I am very far from recommending them either to your Love or Esteem, since I know it is impossible for you to pay either; there being no person so truly the object of abhorrence and contempt in the sight of all good Men, as a Minister of the Gospel, who by his irregular Life renders himself unworthy of his Function and Character. But let me caution

you

you against being drawn into a dislike of the Order it self, as *unnecessary* or *useless*; for this will of course draw you into a disregard of the Ordinances of Christianity, or rather will abolish the Ordinances themselves; and accordingly it has been labour'd by the Promoters of Infidelity, as one effectual expedient to banish the face of Christianity from among us. Let me also caution you against censuring the whole *Body* of the Clergy for the faults of a very few in proportion out of so great a number, and against charging that as Vice or Immorality, which may in reality be no more than Indiscretion or Imprudence. In general, let me caution you against a *Delight* in censuring the Clergy, and a *Desire* to make them appear mean and contemptible in the Eyes of their People, by which you bring upon yourselves the great Guilt of disabling them to do good in their several Stations; and if you find any who are really immoral, and persevere in it, shew your concern for the honour of God and Religion, by taking proper methods to bring them under the Censures of the Church, for the Reformation of them, and the Terror of others.

X. *Above all things, beware of falling into an Unconcernedness and Indifference, in the point of Religion.* When a Revelation is generally believ'd to come from God, and has been receiv'd and embrac'd as such by so many successive Ages and different Nations, and by multitudes of Wise and Good Men in all those Ages and Nations; When it lays down Rules for our *present* State, which manifestly tends to Holiness, and Peace, and the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature, and proposes to Mankind a *future* State of Rewards or Punishments,

ments, both of them unspeakable and endless, according to their Obedience or Disobedience to the Precepts it lays down; Certainly, such a Revelation demands the Regard and Attention of a Rational Creature, so far as soberly to consider it, and to enquire carefully into the Grounds of it, as a Matter in which he is nearly concern'd. Christianity requires no farther favour, than a fair and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Doctrines of it; and for Men who live in a Country where it is publickly profess'd and where they have all the proper and necessary Means of Information, not to attend to it at all, nor to consider it with such Indifference as if they thought themselves unconcern'd in it, is the highest degree of Stupidity and Folly. Let me therefore beseech you, to think of *Religion* as a matter of great Importance in itself, and of infinite Concern to every one of you; and not to suffer yourselves, either to be diverted by the Business or Pleasures of the World, from regarding it, or deluded by wicked Men into an Opinion that it *deserves* not your Regard.

THESE, my Brethren, are the Rules and Directions which I would put into your hands, and recommend to your serious and frequent Perusal; hoping that by the Blessing of God they may contribute to your Establishment in the Christian Faith and Doctrine against all Attempts of Atheistical and Wicked Men to seduce and corrupt you. And that, under the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, they may become effectual to that great end, is the earnest Prayer of

Your Faithful Friend and Pastor,

Edm'. London'.



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